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LITERARY CORRESPONDENCE.

FRANCE.

THE appearance of a book by M. RIBOT is always awaited with the liveliest interest by the philosophical public. The one which he has given us to-day, *Essai sur l'imagination créatrice*, will be received with no less favor than its predecessors, and the most exacting readers will discover that it contains, even for a simple essay, a wealth of thought and material.

What is the nature of imagination, what elements does it contain, what course does it pursue in its development, and what are the types that it presents,—such are the questions that M. Ribot has undertaken to elucidate. With regard to the first point, he contends, conformably to the theory which dominates his entire work, that the imagination is motor in character, which is to say, that since every perception supposes movements of some degree of intensity, our representations which are the residua of prior perceptions also preserve some motor quality; in other words, that every image contains motor elements which necessarily tend to take objective form. And this outward projection of our images is translated into voluntary acts in the sphere of motion, and into imagination in the sphere of intellect. This theory permits us, as will be seen, to bring under a single point of view two extremely important modes of animate activity, and the great advantage herein involved will not be contested.

It might be proper to add that our nervous centers are sensorimotor, having as the correlatives of their reactions psychical states which we call sensations and images, and that the motor elements

are hence always found associated with states of sensibility,—elementary sensibility in the lower stages of life, complex and varied emotional states in the higher stages.

In a dog, in a child, the image of a piece of sugar evokes movements of prehension and gustation; but the image produces these results by virtue of the sensory qualities which are resident in the image itself. The image of some relationship of shading, of some combination of colors, determines the artist to give reality to the images on paper or on canvas; but the motor elements contained in the images would be powerless to give to it external form, if there existed a specific indifference on the part of the tissues and all emotional quality were absent. The emotional element, simple or composite, would appear to be everywhere indispensable; it remains the secret agent of action, whatever the ultimate result may be.

But, as we shall see, M. Ribot actually assigns to this element a considerable part in his analysis of the imagination; he first puts the “intellectual factor” into prominent relief here, that is to say, emphasises the fundamental operations which imagination presupposes, in so far as it borrows its data from consciousness. These two fundamental operations are *dissociation* and *association*, the first of which is the more important, since its office is to disintegrate images and series of images into their elements, which are thus enabled to enter into new combinations. The complete reintegration of the images, on the other hand, would present obstacles to invention; it would fetter that “faculty of thinking by analogy” (be it by *personification* or *transformation*) which is the form of association absolutely indispensable to creative imagination.

M. Ribot then dwells upon the “emotional factor.” All the forms of creative imagination, he writes, involve emotional elements; and these elements, which are nothing but “cause” and “accompaniment” in mechanical and practical inventions, become the very material of creative activity in esthetic invention. The emotional dispositions may all exercise an influence upon the imagination,—melancholia, anger, etc., as well as sthenic emotions

(Olzelt-Newin to the contrary). The emotional factor creates new combinations in so far as it unites different states of consciousness by means of the emotional tone which is common to them. Two things, in sum, are necessary to invention: intellectual materials and motor force. There should be added to the above the "unconscious factor," which, to use the language of M. Ribot, consists of intellectual or emotional processes of which the preparatory work is hidden from us; the "organic conditions," and lastly the "principle of unity," the fixed idea or fixed emotion which serves as the bond of every new synthesis.

The examination of these different factors constantly brings up the question of the relations obtaining between imagination and memory, that is to say, the question of the grounds and modes of formation of these new syntheses of images. For the creative imagination demands new material; and the revivifications of memory—M. Ribot lays considerable stress upon this point—are only repetitions. It remains true, nevertheless, and this appears even in his own analysis, that the imagination is always dependent on the wealth of materials at our command and on our vital power.

What, then, do we see in the lower stages of imagination? An automatic play of images. As M. Ribot has admirably shown, the motor elements inherent in the images gives, in the games of animals and children, new products by their spontaneous manifestation simply, and this manifestation is a pure physiological expression. In the higher stages, the "associating power" resides in an ideal, in a sentiment; it expresses itself by a voluntary orientation of the images; but here also the exercise of this power is limited by our existing stock of images or ideas and by our internal energy, by our memory and our temperament,—I might almost say by our "character," if that word did not possess too broad a signification.

Deserving of mention in this part of the work is an excellent chapter on the creation of myths. Among the many trenchant aphorisms which flow from the pen of M. Ribot are the one in which he says that "literature is a decayed and rationalised mythology," and that in which he remarks that "the imagination becomes rationalised in the individual and in the species,"—a formula

which summarises the law of its development. But primarily the point of importance to us is to pursue his exposition of theory, and the question of the relations of the imagination and of memory is now presented to us under the following form, viz., to determine the bond which exists between quality of images and modes of imagining. This is the question which is broached in the third part of the volume which deals with the principal types of imagination.

The variety of the forms of the imagination and the variety of the forms of character, writes M. Ribot, present analogous problems. The reason for these varieties should be sought deep within the individual. Nothing could be more correct, and this is his reason for setting aside at the very outset the distinction which is based upon the preponderance of this or that group of images. The same kind of constructive imagination ought to be able to express itself indifferently in the language of sounds, of colors, of lines, and even of numbers. But this word *imagination* at one time denotes the assemblage of the images and at another the creative activity; and this ambiguity is calculated to lead psychology astray.

It would be just as superficial, continues M. Ribot, to classify the types of imagination according to images as it would be to classify types of architecture according to the materials employed by the architect. The comparison is a striking one; but is it not faulty in view of the fact that it is the individual, the spirit of the inventor itself, that creates the materials? To this objection M. Ribot would reply that the image nevertheless comes *from without*, and the answer is a valid one. The only reservation that I should make at this point is that the same psychical constitution which maintains in me the pre-eminence of this or that system of images may also be the reason why I combine them in a certain fashion which is characteristic of myself; the image would accordingly be in the nature of revelatory symbols of our inmost character, or at least they would contribute to determining our attitude in practice.

M. Ribot indicates two principal types,—*plastic* imagination and *diffluent* imagination. The first, he says, is that in which the materials are sharply defined images bordering on perception and

where associations with objective relations predominate. The second consists more of images that are vague in outline and conjoined by less rigorous modes of association. In this class the images are chosen for reasons that are emotional in origin, and their forms and associations present also a marked character of subjectivity. Let us add that this second form is distinct from *idealistic imagination*, with which there is a tendency to confound it; it is a genus of which the idealistic imagination is a species.

I cannot help finding some difficulty here. For if the painters, according to the classification of M. Ribot himself, belong almost necessarily to the plastic type, and musicians to the diffuent type, it is impossible to decide whether a given individual is rather a musician or a painter because he possesses a distinctive quality of imagination, or whether, contrariwise, he manifests that quality because a definite system of images is predominant in him. There is some uncertainty on this point, whether his vocation, his personal mark, proceeds from a psychical characteristic having no intimate relationship with the physiological quality of his memory.¹

But the esthetic imagination is not the only one which M. Ribot has treated; he has also studied with great care other and no less interesting forms, like the mystic, the scientific, the practical and mechanical, and the commercial imagination; and finally, what he calls the Utopian imagination. Valuable hints abound in his work, which we may say is the first to embrace the whole of this vast subject; and I can only regret that I have been able to touch on so few points of its discussion.

¹ In a little book called *Memory and Imagination* (1895), to which I may perhaps be permitted to revert, I undertook to discuss the relations obtaining between imagination and memory; I was careful, however, not to confound types of memory with types of imagination, and I endeavored especially to study the uses to which the different images were put in the various classes of individuals which I had selected for study, namely, painters, musicians, poets, and orators. I considered memory as the basis upon which the imagination worked; but I was also inclined to connect the two a little too closely, and there was doubtless some exaggeration in my formula that "to a given system of images corresponds a given manner of imagining," although I included in my "system" emotional and individual, as well as perceptual, images. It will be necessary for me to resume my analysis sometime, profiting by this work of M. Ribot. There is always time for repentance.

A volume published under the title of *Questions de morale* forms the sequel to the *Morale sociale*, of which I have spoken in a previous number, and contains, like its predecessors, the lectures delivered at the *Collège libre des sciences sociales* by MM. G. SOREL, G. MOCH, DARLU, DELBOS, CROISSET, BERNÈS, BELOT, PARODI, FOURNIÈRE, MALAPERT, BUISSON. A great variety of subjects is here treated with unequal felicity. There is nothing more laudable than to labor toward the erection of a sound system of morals, but we should not suffer ourselves to be deluded into being too sanguine as to the success of our undertaking. Like every independent system of ethics, the ethics of the great religions have ultimately sprung from philosophies which offer no more solidity than those freely professed by ourselves. But the philosophies of the religions have been accepted by a common act of faith as the outcome of historical circumstances which it is impossible to reproduce artificially. An ethics independent of dogma can fulfil the office which we expect of it only after having been almost universally accepted; and that hour (I say it without irony) has not yet arrived even among the philosophers. Not having the means for creating the faith which would give to it life, it is necessary to appeal to reason, which is an exceedingly fragile support with the majority of men.

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A work by M. PAUL DUPUY, *Les fondements de la morale*, contains many interesting remarks upon the chief systems of ethics. M. Dupuy does not furnish his readers with a new doctrine, which is something we could not well expect, nor are his conclusions expressed with extraordinary clearness. Everything that might be considered essential has already been said concerning the sources of our moral activity and the historical development of ethics. It appears that the controversy is at present with regard to the attitude of the individual toward society, and while it is true that some schools tend rather to sacrifice the individual to society, it is no less true that certain other schools exaggerate the claims of individualism, and construct their "metaphysics of morals" upon fragile foundations. M. Dupuy avoids extravagances; he is of the opinion, with Mr.

Lester F. Ward, that humanity is something besides pure animality. While actual selection controls biology, sociology on the other hand is the field of artificial selection, and we cannot without rendering ourselves liable to error eliminate from it either will or reason, either belief in liberty or feeling of responsibility. But the task remains to discover the correct state of equilibrium between individual will and social will,—in theory at least, I should add, for the questions are actually resolved in practical life from day to day by sheer force.

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M. J. Novicow, under the title of *La fédération de l'Europe*, has written a most ardent plea in favor of universal peace. He shows this to be not only desirable, but also possible, the way for it having been actually prepared by several positive institutions. In his view, the sociologist is no more chimerical in seeking a remedy for war than the physician is in seeking a remedy for consumption. "Men," he writes, "massacre one another like ferocious beasts because they have certain ideas in their head; if they had other ideas there, they would not massacre one another. All that is necessary to destroy the scourge of war is to extirpate the ideas which are now predominant." It is undoubtedly true that "the ideas of men are continually changing." But the difficulty in the present case is due to the fact that the ideas that give rise to war represent the passions and the desires of men, and that it is much more difficult to educate desires than it is to modify opinions, or even beliefs, which are not bound up with the immediate wants of the human animal. The action of the intellect, nevertheless, is not illusory, and I even think that in the end it will be efficacious, for the reason that societies will ultimately come to understand better the harmony that should obtain between the satisfaction of wants and the morality of acts. M. Novicow possesses so unqualified a faith in the future that he sometimes disposes of obstacles by arguments which are a little too hasty; but this is of little consequence, for upon the whole his book is full of valuable facts and correct thoughts, the perusal of which can only be beneficial.

M. AUGUSTE MATTEUZZI has endeavored in a book translated from the Italian by Mme. Gatti de Gamond, and entitled *Les facteurs de l'évolution des peuples*, to indicate the "part which the physical and terrestrial environment and the heredity of acquired characters play in the evolution of the peoples." The action of the environment and the reaction of the individual are, he writes, the two factors whose combined agency renders biology an extraordinarily complicated science,—a complexity which is still further augmented in sociology because of the influence of each generation upon the one which follows it. Neither the statistical method nor the anthropological method nor the theory of society as an organism is alone sufficient to resolve the problem. The criticisms are good, but has not M. Matteuzzi overreached himself when, adhering to the general views of the geographical school as completed by those of biology, he fancies he is able, by means of the two factors environment and heredity to fathom the secrets of the evolution and the dissolution of societies? Is he not obliged at every successive moment in his examination of the civilisations he is studying to explain the modifications of acquired characters whose transmission would be helpful or harmful, by recurring to facts of an entirely different order, by invoking "laws" in which elements are involved which it would be impossible to neglect? In short, the objection which I should make to the doctrine of M. Matteuzzi, as to the majority of sociological systems, is that they all labor under the illusion that one or two factors are sufficient to explain history; whereas the true scientific method always is to endeavor to ascertain how facts and aggregates of facts vary as functions of one another, with a view to discovering the law of their simultaneous or successive variations in so far as such an object is realisable with any degree of certainty.

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Mention is still to be made of the second edition of the *Oeuvres philosophiques de Leibnitz*, which was the work of the late lamented PAUL JANET and the last legacy bequeathed to philosophy by this conscientious master; of a serious production by M. MAUXION entitled *L'éducation par l'instruction et les théories pédagogiques de Her-*

bart; of a work by M. HERVE BLONDEL, *Les approximations de la vérité*, which expounds with sincerity a conception of philosophy that is derived from Comte, as modified by the principles which dominate the criticism of M. de Roberty; and an attractive book by M. G. LECHARTIER, on *David Hume*.

Les variétés philosophiques of M. DURAND (DE GROS), a new edition, revised and augmented, of a collection of articles published by him in 1871 under the title of *Ontologie et psychologie physiologique*, is the last volume that we shall have from this eminent scholar and writer; he died in November of last year on his estate at Rodez, where he pursued to the advanced age of seventy-four years the arduous occupation of an agriculturalist, though without relinquishing his pursuit of science and philosophy. Physiologist, anthropologist, and logician, he left his mark on everything that he touched. It is not my purpose to write a biographical notice of him here, but I could not close my present correspondence without recording the expression of my sympathy and sorrow for this valiant writer, whose genius remained young and whose heart continued ardent, despite the many injustices to which he had been subjected.

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